

IT TAKES A VILLAGE – HUDSON MOOSE CASE

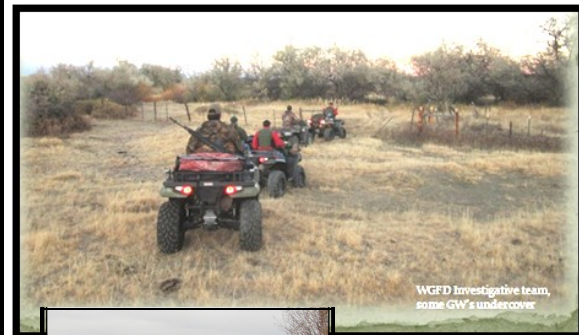
On the evening of October 15, 2012, a landowner in the Hudson, Wyoming area heard a volley of 15 or 16 gunshots coming from a privately-owned river bottom property on the Popo Agie/Little Wind River. The landowner saw three individuals carrying rifles and driving a dark blue vehicle near the scene of the shooting. The following morning, the landowner reported the incident to South Riverton Game Warden Chris Daubin. The area is located within the boundaries of the Wind River Indian Reservation and involves complicated jurisdictional boundaries. Wildlife found on Indian-owned land falls under the jurisdiction of the Tribal Fish and Game Department (TFGD) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA); however, wildlife found on non-Indian owned lands within reservation boundaries falls under the jurisdiction of the State of Wyoming and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD).

Later that same afternoon, the landowner and Warden Daubin used ATVs to reach the location of the suspicious activity. Upon investigation, Daubin and the landowner discovered four dead moose (two bulls and two cows). The two bulls had been partially field dressed and the cows were left un-gutted. The weather was still fairly warm and the large animals had already begun to spoil. The scene revealed that both the shooters and moose they killed were entirely on non-Indian owned fee title land within the exterior boundary of the Wind River Indian Reservation. By Wyoming Game and Fish Commission regulations, this area was closed to moose hunting. Warden Daubin left the scene to call for assistance from other area wardens.

Warden Daubin returned just before sunset that evening and staked out the area in hopes the perpetrators would return. After waiting well into the evening and seeing no sign of the perpetrators, Warden Daubin decided to call it a night, as he knew he had his work cut out for him the next day.



With the help of Lander Region Wardens Brad Gibb, Brad Hovinga, Brian DeBolt, Jason Hunter, and Investigator Scott Browning, the task of gathering evidence began.



On October 17th, several items were recovered including .243 and 30/0 casings, bullet jackets and fragments from both bulls and one of the cows. Tire and foot tracks were also documented/photographed and cigarette butts from Kool and Marlboro brand cigarettes were collected. That evening while the wardens were still collecting evidence from the scene, two men (Phillip "PJ" Warren and Russell Warren) parked their truck, crossed the Popo Agie, and walked directly towards the two bulls. Wardens stopped the men just shy of the two bull moose carcasses to question them. PJ stated he was just looking for his brother but wardens noted he was carrying a .44 mag. Revolver and a large buck knife. The vehicle they were driving was registered to a Phillip "Rocky" Hurtado of nearby Arapaho, Wyoming. In the back of the truck was an empty pack of Kool cigarettes.



Warden Daubin and Investigator Browning met with the Tribal Fish and Game Department (TFGD) to gather more information about the native Indians (Hurtado and PJ Warren). With the assistance of TFGF and the FBI, an interview with Hurtado produced a real break in the case. Hurtado admitted to shooting the moose along with PJ Warren as

well as two non-Indians, Sammy Edlund and Danielle Najera, of Gillette, Wyoming. Gillette Game Warden Irah Leonetti conducted follow-up interviews with Edlund and Najera, producing confessions and weapons. After multiple interviews, all four suspects admitted to shooting moose without licenses and allowing them to go to waste.

Charges: Seven charges were filed against each defendant:

- 2x Accessory/Taking antlered moose without license in closed season
- 2x Accessory/Wanton Destruction of big game animal
- 2x Waste of edible portion of game animal
- Hunt on private land without permission

Case Results:

Each defendant entered a plea agreement and pled guilty to:

- one count of Accessory/Taking antlered moose without a license in a closed season;
- one count of Accessory/Wanton destruction of a big game animal; and
- one count of hunting on private land without permission.

Each defendant was:

- fined \$20,500 (suspended);
- sentenced to one year of jail (suspended); and
- served 7 days (Warren served 9 days)
- ordered to pay \$7,500 in restitution,
- 2 years unsupervised probation
- lifetime revocation of hunting privileges in Wyoming and 39 other violator compact states (Edlund lost privileges for 20 years), and forfeiture of five firearms.

This crime made state and national news including newspapers as far as San Francisco, California. Investigation and prosecution involved 10 WGFD employees in some capacity and 6 government agencies.

